

Oregon

BULL & DEERE

Ag museum showcases one man's farm equipment in Irrigon

By GEORGE PLAVERN
EO Media Group

Wayne Schnell was 11 years old when he drove his first tractor, a 1941 John Deere Model A that his father bought for the family farm near Vancouver, Washington.

Seventy-four years later, Schnell still has that same Model A — along with about 60 other tractors and 20 or so hay balers spanning decades of American farm history.

Now 82, Schnell has since retired and sold his farm south of Irrigon, but couldn't bear to see all the old equipment hauled off to the junkyard. He and his wife, Wanda, opened the Skinny Bull Ag Museum in March to preserve and share Wayne's collection with the community.

Most of the tractors, balers, combines and backhoes Schnell actually used in the field. Others, he admits, he bought just to have.

"It's like other people who collect stuff," he said with a smile. "You always need one more."

The oldest tractors in Schnell's gallery date back to 1929, including a John Deere GP and Caterpillar 15. He has a 1945 World War II-era John Deere that's likely one of the few left in existence with its original tires, made of recycled material.

But it was the Model A that Schnell said started it all. He has fond memories of plowing his family's hayfields as a boy, stopping just long enough to split a peanut butter sandwich with their collie, Bowser.

Schnell personally repainted the Model A, which shines the signature John Deere green and yellow. He insists the old machine faithfully runs to this day.

"How do you throw something like this away?" he said. "I just hated to see it destroyed."

The vintage tractors might not look so practical compared to today's



Retired farmer Wayne Schnell, who runs the Skinny Bull Ag Museum with his wife, Wanda, says he drove his first tractor when he was 11 years old on his family farm outside Vancouver, Wash.



Years of rust adds texture to the back of the driver's seat of a 1950 model 50 John Deere tractor at the Skinny Bull Ag Museum in Irrigon.

technology, with GPS steering and touch screens. Heck, Schnell said they didn't even have air conditioning in the old days. They were just happy to sit down.

Schnell came to appreciate tractors while working as a machinist for 16 years. He later moved to Irrigon

in 1972 and got back into farming, growing 340 acres of alfalfa hay near town.

He always found room for more tractors, which he grew to love like old cars.

"You appreciate all the engineering and work that went into building

them, and how well they've worked for so many years," he said. "You grow attached to them."

It was actually at a classic car show where Wayne met Wanda, and they married in 2003. As a collector herself — Wanda can never have too many hurricane lamps or cast iron pans, she says — she was completely behind the idea of opening a museum for Wayne's collection.

"Once Wayne decides he wants to do something, there's no doubt he's going to accomplish it," Wanda said.

When the Schnells sold the farm in 2013, they reached a special agreement; the buyer purchased the old 10,000-square-foot Keglers supermarket behind Bank of Eastern Oregon in Irrigon, and used it as a down payment on the farm. This is where Wayne and Wanda have set up Skinny Bull, which opened March 22.

The Schnells continue to make little improvements and swap stories with visitors who come to check out the museum. Admission is free, though donations are suggested.

BLM computer used to impersonate former employee

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A U.S. Bureau of Land Management computer was apparently used to impersonate a former agency employee and disparage two Oregon ranchers recently sentenced to prison for arson.

The incident occurred after the Capital Press posted an online article about the five-year prison terms received by Dwight Lincoln Hammond, 73, and his son, Steven Dwight Hammond, 46, for fires set on BLM property near Diamond, Ore., in 2001 and 2006.

A person identified as Greg Allum posted three comments on the article, calling the ranchers "clowns" who endangered firefighters and other people in the area while burning valuable rangeland.

Greg Allum, a retired BLM heavy equipment operator, soon called Capital Press to complain that he had not made those comments and request that they be taken down from the website. Capital Press has since removed the comments.

A search of the Internet Protocol address associated with the comments revealed it is owned by the BLM's office in Denver, Colo.

Allum, who continues to build livestock watering systems in Eastern Oregon, said he is friends with the Hammonds and was alerted to the comments by neighbors who know he wouldn't have written them.

"I feel bad for them. They lost a lot and they're going to lose more," Allum said of the ranchers.

He said employees of the BLM in the area have long had a contentious relationship with the Hammonds.

One of those employees likely chose to use Allum's name to post the comments because he is known to disagree with the characterization of the Hammonds as villains, he said.

"They're not terrorists. There's this hatred in the BLM for them, and I don't get it," Allum said.

Allum said he wants any BLM employees involved in the incident punished not because they impersonated him, but because they wasted government resources during work hours.

"It was done by a federal employee getting paid," he said.

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